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# Mental illness and the justice system

**Forensic psychology expert speaks at Lions Gate Hospital Nov. 24.**

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**R**enowned psychiatrist and UBC professor Elisabeth Zoffmann will give a free lecture at the Lions Gate Hospital auditorium next week.

On Wednesday, Nov. 24, Zoffmann will lead a discussion on forensic psychology – the intersection between psychology and the criminal justice system – as part of the North Shore Schizophrenia Society's ongoing public education initiatives.

Marguerite Hardin, the society's support coordinator, says the talk is meant to inform people of the processes that take place when a mentally ill person is accused of committing a serious crime.

In some cases, this could lead to an individual being found not criminally responsible because of a mental disorder.

While the talk is primarily directed at the families of those suffering from mental illnesses, interested members of the public are also encouraged to attend, Hardin says.

The society wants people to understand the role that serious mental illnesses, if left untreated, can play in serious crimes. It also wants family members of those with illnesses to know their rights and options if something tragic happens.

"We're primarily a family organization. We find there is very little education and preparation for families after diagnosis," says Hardin.

In the past, the society has presented talks on issues such as depression and anxiety with the hopes of educating people and demystifying mental illness.

"There's a lot of prejudices around mental illnesses," Hardin says. "We want people to know it's not shameful."

Zoffmann's lecture, which begins at 7:30 p.m., is a rare chance for people to hear about a unique area of the law from a leading expert. During the talk, Zoffmann will discuss a recent criminal case in which forensic psychology played a key factor.

For more information on the event call 604-926-0856 or visit [www.northshoreschizophrenia.org](http://www.northshoreschizophrenia.org).

The society's website also contains info on counselling services, family support groups, para-legal support and education courses for people affected by mental illnesses.

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